



Sharing Information & Giving Support to Hawai'i's Family Caregivers

VOL. 2 • ISSUE 3 • 2003 • THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING • DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

A Tale of Two Independent Women

by Heidi Caglayan, Facilitator of the North Shore Family Caregiver Support Group

I have discovered that a lot of elder care is about mothers and daughters. I often see daughters pushing their mothers in malls and stores, shopping for groceries, paying the bills and generally giving back in some way with assistance that they might have received when they were a child.

My mother raised me to be very independent and is herself this way. Unfortunately, if you live into old, old age, past 85, the physical and mental challenges can sometimes rob you of quality of life, although you still have a lively spirit within. It is this independent spirit that con-



Recently, Heidi Caglayan spoke at the Kaua'i conference *Caring for Families, Caring for Yourself: A Caregiver's Workshop*. See related story on Heidi's caregiver support group on page 6.

move and live near us, but she didn't want to interfere with our lives. We proceeded with our plans and moved to Kaua'i, leaving my Mom to live alone in San Clemente. We knew full well that we risked appearing uncaring toward my mother and her needs.

After six months of living on her own in San Clemente, reality sunk in

for my Mom. Dad had died over five years ago, and she was alone. She decided she would move near us.

The word here is, *she* decided. I invited; she decided.

I then returned to California at Christmas to pack up her home of 30 years and move her to Kaua'i. She moved into a one-bedroom ocean view condo with paid caregivers coming to the home. The first 2-3 months was a very difficult adjustment, but with consistent attention, proper medication and excellent support and coordination from the Agency on Elderly Affairs, she made amazing improvement.

I hired my friend, a massage therapist, to come every week to massage (Continued on page 2.)

Where Do I Start?

The best place to start in getting information on caregiver services in your community is your county office on aging. They can be reached at the following numbers:

Honolulu Elderly Affairs Division
523-4545

Kaua'i Agency on Elderly Affairs
241-6400

Maui County Office on Aging
270-7755

Hawai'i County Office on Aging
961-8600 (Hilo)
327-3597 (Kona)

tinues to be a strength, but is also sometimes a weakness. I am now an only child and I knew my Mom and I could not happily live together, nor could I offer her end stage type care in our home at the front end of her diminishing physical and mental capacities. From experience, I had seen a dozen widows in San Clemente still living alone well into their 90's, so I knew solutions for my 86-year-old mother's care had to be in the context of a 5 to 10 year plan.

My husband and I have always dreamed of moving to Kaua'i upon retirement. We finished building our home on Kaua'i and moved here the day after I retired from 31 years as a psychologist. We invited my Mom to

Upcoming & etc...

Managing Your Medications 2003

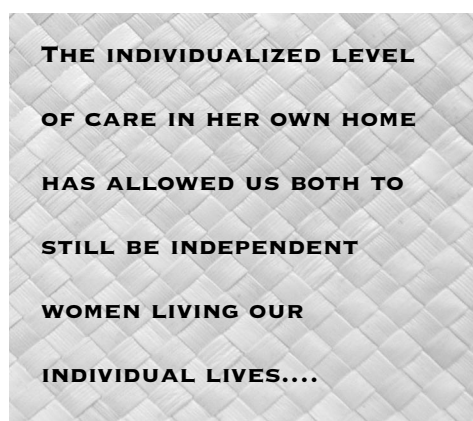
There are two ways to Manage Your Medications in October:

1. Statewide medication reviews from October 1 - 31, 2003; and
2. Public seminars statewide.

Heidi's Story

(Continued from page 1.)

her feet and lower legs to improve circulation. A wonderful caregiver from Hawai'i Healthcare Professionals comes four days a week to be a companion, clean her home and take



her on outings using the familiar car she no longer drives. Meals are delivered five days a week, a nurse comes by once a month and my husband and I drop in randomly to visit during the week. On the weekends, I do her grocery shopping, pay her bills and fill her medicine box.

The individualized level of care in her own home has allowed us both to still be independent women living our individual lives, retaining our privacy in separate homes with each feeling much more at peace during these very different stages of our lives. We made decisions together to include both our needs, not just to have elder care become the dominating factor. As for me, I believe that a long life often comes down to a room with a view, and if you are lucky, someone you love nearby, someone who can still live their own life while also supporting

Please refer to the article on page 3 for details.

5th Annual Carousel of Care: Caregiving – A Family Affair

Saturday, November 1, 2003

7:45 am - 4:00 pm

Kona, Hawai'i

Keynote speaker: Dr. Robin Seto
"How to Enhance Communication Between Physician and Families"

and loving yours.

To be deeply honest, my Mom's last stage of life now reminds me of a D.H. Lawrence poem:

The Ship of Death

*Have you built your ship of death,
oh have you?
Oh build your ship of death,
for you will need it.*

*Now in the twilight, sit by the invisible sea
Of peace, and build your little ship
Of death, that will carry the soul
On its last journey, on and on, so still
So beautiful, over the last of seas.*

*When the day comes, that will come.
Oh think of it in the twilight peacefully!
The last day, and the setting forth
On the longest journey, over the hidden sea
To the last wonder of oblivion.*

*Oblivion, the last wonder!
When we have trusted ourselves entirely
To the unknown, and are taken up
Out of our little ships of death
Into pure oblivion.*

*Oh build your ship of death,
be building it now
With dim, calm thoughts and quiet hands
Putting its timbers together in the dusk.*

*Rigging its mast with the silent,
invisible sail
That will spread in death to the breeze
Of the kindness of the cosmos, that will waft
The little ship with its soul
to the wonder-goal.*

*Ah, if you want to live in peace
on the face of the earth
Then build your ship of death, in readiness
For the longest journey,
over the last of seas.*

This event is sponsored by the Hawai'i Community Caregiver Network, Alu Like and the Hawai'i County Office on Aging.

Scholarships to attend this conference may be available through Alu Like for Native Hawaiian caregivers or for those who care for Native Hawaiian elderly. Respite care may be available to assist family caregivers to care for older family members. Call the Hawai'i County Office of Aging at 327-3597 for more information or to register.



Sharing Information & Giving Support to Hawai'i's Family Caregivers

E LOA KE OLA



MAY LIFE
BE LONG

The Executive Office on Aging is the state agency whose mission is to assure the well-being of Hawai'i's 200,000+ adults age 60 and over.

Phone: 808-586-0100
www.hawaii.gov/health/eoa

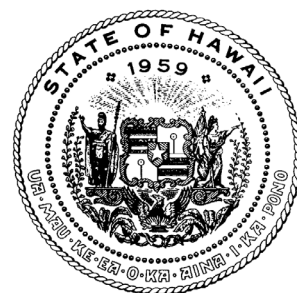
Linda Lingle
Governor

Dr. Chiyome Fukino
Director of Health

Roberta Onzuka-Anderson
Chair, Policy Advisory
Board for Elder Affairs

Pat Sasaki
Executive Director
Executive Office on Aging

Wes Lum
Caregiver Resource Initiative
Project Coordinator



We provide access to our activities without regard to race, color, national origin (including language), age, sex, religion, or disability. Write or call EOA or our departmental Affirmative Action Officer at Box 2278, Honolulu, HI 96801 or at 808-586-4616 (voice/tty) within 180 days of a problem.

Managing Your Medications 2003

What is the program "Managing Your Medications" all about? Today's health-care consumer is likely to take over-the-counter medicines and supplements (herbal remedies, cold medications, vitamins and/or dietary supplements) in addition to doctor-prescribed medications. As a result, there is growing concern that the use of multiple drugs may result in unexpected complications. Some drugs can counteract each other, or possibly diminish their intended effectiveness.

Hence, HMSA started "Managing Your Medications." The program encourages people who take multiple medications to have them reviewed by a pharmacist. Consumers can learn about the proper use of prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins and herbal remedies. By participating in a review, people can be assured that their medication regimen is safe, and that they are getting the most out of their medications.

Why is "Managing Your Medications" important? Today, more consumers are treating themselves with over-the-counter medicines and other supplements that are all considered drugs. There is a growing concern that using multiple drugs can counteract each other or diminish their intended effectiveness.

In 2001, pharmacists examined nearly 3,000 medications and identified potential problems in 20 percent of the medications reviewed. Some of the potential problems included adverse drug reactions (recognized 19 percent of the time), duplicate prescriptions and improperly taking medications (recognized 20 percent of the time).

In 2002, more than 2,000 medications were reviewed by participating pharmacists, and in 24 percent of these cases, they identified potential problems. Potential adverse drug reactions were recognized in 25 per-

cent of the medication reviews, and a lack of medication compliance was recognized 30 percent of the time. In 34 percent of the cases, pharmacists made recommended changes in dosage timing.



How Do I Manage My Medications? Regardless of participants' age or health plan, all reviews are FREE of charge and confidential. There are two ways to manage your medications in October:

1. Statewide medication reviews from October 1 - October 31, 2003. Call your pharmacist to schedule a medication review. Please bring your prescribed and over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements and vitamins in their original containers. Participating pharmacies include Longs Drugs, Times, Good Neighbor Pharmacies and independent pharmacies throughout the state. For a list of participating pharmacies in your

area, check The Honolulu Advertiser in October or visit www.HMSA.com.

- 2. Statewide public seminars.** Come to one of these free seminars to learn more about how to better manage your medications:
- **Maui:** Saturday, October 4, 2003 at the Maui Beach Hotel
 - **Kaua'i:** Saturday, October 11, 2003 at Wilcox Memorial Hospital
 - **Hilo:** TBA
 - **O'ahu:** Saturday, October 18, 2003 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, Coral Ballroom, 9:00 am to noon. Validated parking is \$3.00. Shari Kogan, MD, medical director of Geriatrics at The Queen's Medical Center, will discuss medications and the elderly, and how to minimize adverse drug reactions. Joseph Pepping, PharmD, president of Wellness Institute International, will talk about the variety and value of nutritional supplements. A clinical pharmacist who specializes in nutritional pharmacology and pain management, Pepping will discuss how supplements and lifestyle changes may improve your quality of life. To register, call (808) 948-6398 on O'ahu.

Don't delay. Manage your medications today!

Dehydration and the Common Cold

by Randolph M. Oba, PharmD

Dehydration occurs when you lose water and electrolytes from your body and you don't have enough water to carry on your regular bodily functions. Some of the common symptoms include dizziness, drowsiness, headache, and amber-colored urine. The solution is often simple. The average recommendation is to drink at least eight glasses of water per day. If you take in a reasonable, balanced diet with these eight glasses of water, you should be okay.

When someone gets a cold, the common symptoms include sore throat, fever, headache, dizziness, nasal stuffiness, runny nose, cough and tiredness. Mucus membranes are

often affected. They become inflamed and swell. They also become more porous. When there is fever, the body loses more water through perspiration. If diarrhea is present, it compounds the water and electrolyte loss. As you can see, the common cold and dehydration share some common symptoms. During a common cold, one is more prone to dehydration. This is the reason one should consume more water during a cold.

Most people's first reaction to many of these symptoms is to immediately run to the medicine cabinet or the local neighborhood pharmacy and purchase a variety of cough and cold preparations. Part of the battle with the symptoms of cough and cold is against dehydration. By simply increasing your daily intake of water

(Continued on page 6.)



H O N O L U L U

Caring for Family, Caring for Yourself: A Caregivers Conference

The Elderly Affairs Division kicked-off a round of statewide caregivers conferences for 2003. The first one was at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel on September 6. Feedback from the 700-plus caregivers and community members who attended indicated that the event was a huge success. Family caregivers learned about available resources and information to help ease caregiving tasks. Participants also took the opportunity to network and share best practices.

The capacity crowd was treated to "Is Anybody Listening?" vignettes about caregivers' experiences presented by former television ad performers Ben and Gloria Tamashiro. Keynote speaker Elinor Ginzler, Manager of Independent Living and Long Term Care for AARP of Washington, D.C., an



Elinor Ginzler

expert in independent living and long-term care, highlighted the Tamashiros' performance by keeping the spotlight on caregivers. Ms. Ginzler emphasized the importance of the caregiver's role in the community health care system and the need for caregivers to take care of their own health.

The conference brought together 25 presenters experienced in the aging and caregiving fields. They shared their expertise and provided a variety of practical techniques and useful information. There were 21 concurrent sessions on subjects ranging from making the home caregiver friendly, legal issues, coping skills, making the right choices, handling difficult behaviors, dealing with stress and avoiding burnout. All the sessions provided essential knowl-

edge and hands-on skills geared to assist family caregivers.

Additionally, 36 exhibits offered a variety of informational resources that included various care options, assistive devices, resources and services. Participants had the choice of indulging in an assortment of self-care activities, including aromatherapy, lomi-lomi, shiatsu massage, bio-magnetic and Healing Touch techniques, plus best practices of foot care.

The event sponsors—AARP, Alu Like, HMSA and the Elderly Affairs Division—agreed that focusing attention and giving support to caregivers not only had a positive impact on them, but on their loved ones as well. More than ever, the well-being of caregivers is of great importance to our community health care system, in light of today's large number of family caregivers taking care of older persons. Encouraging caregivers to take care of themselves not only helps them be effective in their daily work, but allows them to endure the rigors of providing care. It's a sound investment that delays nursing home placements and reduces the use of costly alternatives, such as long-term facility care.



M A U I



Above: Photos from the Maui Caregivers' Conference.

A Caregiver's Story: Bingo Anyone?

by Geri Ah Sam, Family Caregiver Resource Coordinator, Maui County Office On Aging

Last year I became an orphan. My mother died 10 days after her 92nd birthday. Near the end of the year, "some-

thing" told me that she would not make it to her 93rd birthday.

I stopped working at the end of December, and one month later I was in an ambulance accompanying her to the ER. She fell in her elder care apartment, but fortunately, she did not break anything. She was subsequently discharged, and was now reluctantly coming to live with me. I made many phone calls to our caregiver's network to help make a decision on how I could best help her. Her doctor agreed that the fall would require that she have physical therapy daily, and that she could benefit from a temporary placement in a nursing home. He said that when her mobility improved, she could return to her apartment.

Of course none of this happened without a great deal of reluctance on her part. She maintained that I was in "cahoots" with the doctor to "put her away." It did not help that I have a background in nursing—she thought that I had power to influence the physician. The staff at the nursing home was incredible in their attempts to help her adjust. They were colleagues, and they supported my decision.

What I was not prepared for was the amount of work it would take to clean her unit at the senior housing complex where she resided. My primary goal was to make her living space safe.

My mother had always been someone who kept everything—yogurt containers, pieces of aluminum foil, pie pans from the bakery, ice cream cup containers, plastic cutlery from every fast food business and old medicine. Also, when residents left the complex and wanted to give away their articles of clothing and small pieces of furniture, she would collect and store them as well. Needless to say, the housing staff was constantly on her case to clean up, but she maintained that someday, someone would need these treasures.

I girded my loins, and with the help of dedicated friends and family, began the task. At the conclusion of our work, we were able to provide the activity department at the nursing home with boxes of yarn, materi-

(Continued on page 6.)

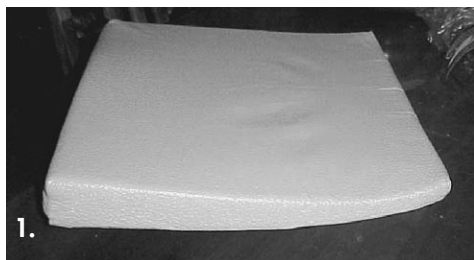
It worked for me

by Karen Koles and the
collective experiences of the
Eldercare Support Group



Q: My husband spends a considerable amount of time in a wheelchair. How can I make him more comfortable?

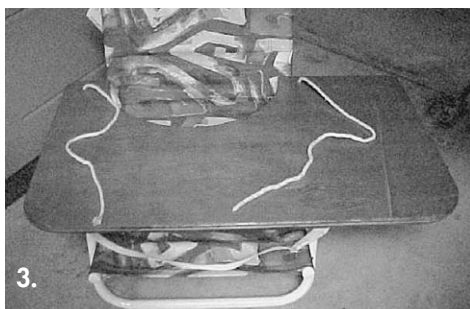
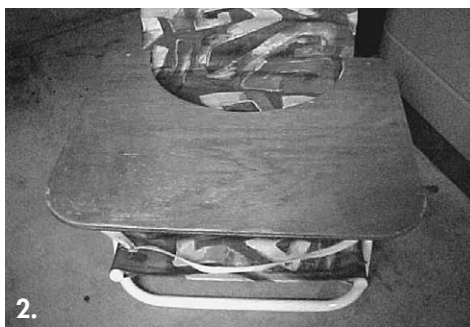
A: If your husband is unable to shift his weight, notice that because of the “sag” in the seat, his weight will not be evenly distributed, and skin irritations may occur. To prevent this, we used a sturdy foam cushion that was upholstered in a washable vinyl. The bottom surface was curved to fill in the wheelchair “sag.” The top surface was flat. The front of the cushion was about 2 to 2-1/2 inches high, while the back was only an inch thick (see photo 1). The purpose for this



slightly backwards slope was to help prevent Dad from pitching forward in his wheelchair.

We placed an open bath towel over the cushion. Other caregivers have used a sheepskin. The towel enabled us to do minor placement adjustments after lowering Dad into the wheelchair without having to lift him again and again. The sheepskin allowed for better air circulation.

Our initial tabletop was a symmetrically cut tabletop that fit around Dad (see photo 2). Two knotted ropes were threaded through holes drilled in the tabletop. These ropes were looped around the metal supports of his wheelchair, then tied in the back. The only change in our second and improved model was a wider left side (see photo 3), because Dad's paralyzed left arm tended to slip off the first tabletop and resulted in a weight transfer and uncomfortable positioning. To further



improve this tabletop, larger holes may be routed out where cups may be inserted, preventing possible spills during meal times.

Place thin cushions or folded hand towels under your husband's elbows and forearms (where he rests on the tabletop) to prevent skin irritations.

If your husband is unable to move his legs, you might want to place padding or thin cushions between his legs and the metal parts of the wheelchair.

You may want to tie a bag to the handles of the wheelchair (just as they do at the hospital to carry charts when transporting patients). To improve on this idea, attach pockets to the outside of the bags to hold additional items. One caregiver used Velcro to close the bag and pockets.

Q: Doctor visits are so frustrating for me. For obvious reasons, I try to schedule visits to two or three doctors on the same day. Even though all of the doctors practice in the same clinic, each of their nurses ask me what medications my Mom is taking.

A: On an index card, I wrote the name of the medication, the doctor who prescribed it, the date it was prescribed and the dosage. Next, I had this card laminated. Then, I simply handed the card to the nurse at the beginning of each visit. If a new medication was prescribed and I didn't have time to make a new card, I'd

just cross off or add information on the back of the card, using a laundry marker type of pen (a ball-point pen or regular type of felt marker won't work as well).

Another caregiver wrote a one-page report before each visit, noting any new developments or changes in his Dad's condition that had occurred since the previous doctor's appointment. To write this report, he'd refer to notes that he had kept on a calendar.

Q: Any suggestions for simple, yet effective bibs?

A: One suggestion is to stitch together two thicknesses of washcloths. Cut two lengths of bias tape and sew these to two corners. Voila! You now have bibs that you can throw into the washer!

Another caregiver used alligator clips crimped to a length of ball chain (similar to the napkin clips used in a dentist office). He then attached the clips to large disposable towels like the ones used at car repair shops. After meals, he simply unclipped and threw the paper towel away! You may also want to ask your dentist where you can purchase a similar clip.

There's also an additional use of this alligator clip set-up (but with a longer chain). If your loved one stands upright while you are attempting to change a dia-



per, you know that the shirt often times gets in the way. Attach one of the alligator clips to the bottom front of the shirt. Place the chain over his shoulder and attach the second clip to the bottom back of the shirt.

Another caregiver suggested saving the clip that is used to refasten bags of coffee. Be sure to get the clip that has a hole. Tie a shoestring, twine or anything similar through these holes. Clip this contraption to a towel.

Readers: What would you like to read about in future columns of "It Worked for Me"? We want to hear from you! Call us at 586-0100.

North Shore Group Gives Unconditional Support

The North Shore Family Caregivers Support Group meets monthly on designated Fridays from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm at Kalihiwai Ridge on Kaua'i. We will celebrate our one year anniversary this October after the Kaua'i Caregiver's Conference in September.

Featured Caregiver Support Group

NORTH SHORE FAMILY CAREGIVERS SUPPORT GROUP

CONTACT: HEIDI CAGLAYAN

PHONE: 828-6417

E-MAIL: CAGLAYANS9@AOL.COM

We are a group of women who find comfort in each other's stories. We are all doing elder parent care in unique ways and greatly benefit from these individual differences. It is mostly about our mothers, and a father now and then, who present a variety of needs, and so we offer a variety of responses that often reflect our relationship from the past. We do this without judgment, knowing everyone is doing the best they can with the resources they have available.

The most compelling needs are to nurture compassion and work through unfinished relationship issues while there is still time. We are all middle aged with old parents, and as baby boomers, we are not slowing down in our work or retirement life. Adding an aging parent to this equation has been a challenge for all of us, so support from others going through this has been invaluable.

A helpful ritual during our meetings is the Suggestion Circle. One usually requests this towards the end of our session. The person with a problem or concern states their problem in a simple sentence and then we go around the group with each person sharing their best suggestion. The suggestions are recorded for the person asking for the Circle. The person receiving the suggestions can only say "thank you" to avoid discounting and put downs

such as "I tried that already and it didn't work." After the go around, the list of suggestions is given to the person who asked for the Circle, with a statement that they trust they will use what works for them.

Our opening ritual is an affirmation activity and our closing ritual is to share mournings or celebrations, then resentments or regrets, and finally appreciations. This way, we can begin and end our meetings on a positive note, plus we have a chance to say something at the end that may not have been appropriate for the meeting's topic. The ending also gives us a sense of what members may be going through more privately, so we might be able to give them support or encouragement sometime during the month before our next meeting. In addition to the meetings, half-day field trips are arranged to give caregivers enjoyable experiences outside their usual routine.

The most rewarding outcome of our group is that we all feel less alone with our situations. Receiving unconditional acceptance heals bro-

ken spirits and brings us hope for the future. We share the belief that if we can somehow get through these times, the results of nurturing compassion and finding peace in relationships will have been worth it all.

For more information about the North Shore Family Caregiver Support Group, please contact Heidi Caglayan at 828-6417 or by e-mail at caglayans9@aol.com.

County Corner

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al, thread, and other craft supplies. Their thrift store became the recipient of bags of clothing, bedding (some of which were in their original packages because she bought them for beds she did not have) and other household items.

While she was alive, Mom enjoyed playing Bingo for pennies each Sunday. We would have to plan her day around this activity. During our cleaning efforts we found at least 6 bingo game boards. In addition we found \$352 in pennies. Every used pill container, each drawer and every jewelry box had a copper coin.

At the graveside following her funeral, instead of flower petals, we placed her pennies on her casket. The pallbearers filled their gloves with coins and tied them to the casket handles.

As we left the cemetery you could almost hear her call out "Bingo."

H A W A I ' I

Many were in attendance at the second "Caring for Family, Caring for Yourself" caregiver's conference, held at the Naniloa Hotel on September 9, 2003. Sponsored by the AARP, HMSA, Alu Like and the Hawai'i County Office of Aging, the Conference attracted 160 participants seeking information and access to community resources. For many caregivers, validation for their daily effort was warmly acknowledged.

The keynote speaker, Elinor Ginzler delivered a powerful speech to

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Dehydration and the Common Cold

(Continued from page 3.)

(greater than eight glasses per day), you can control many of the symptoms. When dehydrated, a sore throat will feel even worse. Dehydration renders cough medications such as Robitussin (guaifenesin) ineffective. The action of these drugs is supposed to increase the secretion of water into the respiratory tract to remove foreign particles and bacteria from the lungs. However if the amount of water in your body is insufficient, water cannot be secreted into the respiratory tract. Thus, cold sufferers experience the dry hacking cough instead.

Simply put, drink more water. A word of caution: if you suffer from heart disease or kidney disease where your fluid intake may be restricted, please consult your physician before doing anything out of the ordinary.

End-of-Life Resources Available for Caregivers

Making End-of-life Decisions" is now available from the Executive Office on Aging. Based on feedback from caregivers, older adults, and professionals, we have created this easy-to-understand, informative brochure to acquaint people with the terminology and procedures used in end-of-life care. Many of the ideas expressed might be new to people, but they are very common in medical settings and are important to know.

Although modern medicine helps many people lead longer and healthier lives, it has its limits. Many of us may fear that medical technology could help us live longer, but leave us dependent on others, in pain and unable to think or make decisions for ourselves.

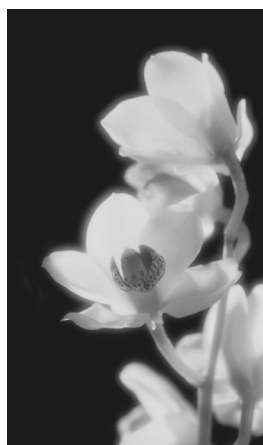
We hope this booklet will help you think about these issues, formulate your own questions and discuss them with loved ones so that you can make good decisions about the type of care that you want. Once you have talked about your wishes with loved ones and your doctors, we encourage you to complete an advance directive. This form allows you to document your wishes for end-of-life care and appoint an agent if you cannot speak for yourself. Once you've completed your advance directive, please share copies with your doctor, loved ones and agent.

Free copies of an advance directive are available from the Executive Office on Aging. In addition, we have a series of brochures that may be helpful for you:

1. "Start the Conversation" is published by AARP. This brochure offers suggestions for starting conversations about end-of-life care, and gives you important information about hospice, finances and tips on beginning these difficult discussions.
2. "Pain—Questions to ask your doctor" is a brochure that outlines questions to ask your doctor about pain treatment. People with serious illnesses face many challenges, and the one they fear most is pain. But pain does not

have to be a part of being sick. Most people, even those living with cancer, can have their pain controlled with simple, affordable treatment.

3. "Aloha Pumehana—Improving End of Life Care" is an edition of the Elderly Affairs newsletter. It has several articles by local experts, including Mits Aoki, on a variety of locally relevant topics.



4. "Grief and Bereavement" is a brochure that outlines normal grieving and gives further resources for support. Grief is a normal emotion that often begins long before a loved one passes away.

5. "Breaking the Ice—Stories on End-of-life Issues" is an 8.5 minute video. Produced locally, the video is designed to start discussions on end-of-life issues. Three local families tell their stories and may inspire others to begin discussions before it is too late. It is available for purchase from Kokua Mau at 1-800-474-2113 or (808) 585-9977.
6. Visit www.kokuamau.org for a variety of resources and information on end-of-life care. Kokua Mau, the local coalition to improve end-of-life care, can link you with local and national resources, and hopefully answer important questions. The vision of Kokua Mau is to weave a lei of community support so that the people of Hawai'i can die in the place of their choice, free of pain and suffering, and in accordance with their values, beliefs and traditions. For further information please call Kokua Mau at 1-800-474-2113 or (808) 585-9977.

County Corner

(Continued from page 4.)

the audience. She outlined the tremendous work done by caregivers nationwide, and finally, asked the audience to give themselves a standing ovation. The long-term care system could not bear the weight of caring for the elderly without the labor of love of family caregivers.

Several morning sessions allowed conference participants a choice of two ses-

sions that would be most helpful in their situations. Ms. Ginzler facilitated

Family Conversations, giving practical ways for the family to start communicating with each other to help diffuse possible conflicts over health care and financial decisions. Heidi Wong, Geriatrics Social Worker of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, pro-



vided a brief overview of The Illuminated Life program dedicated to "Third Agers" (60 years of age and older) and their need to have a sense of purpose and direction through



life. The Caregiver Survival session, by Hospice of Hilo representative Sally Wehrsig,

presented caregivers with helpful and compassionate methods of caring for their loved ones and themselves. She discussed how to recognize "caregiver burnout." Some were brought to tears as she spoke about the frustrations that caregivers face with loved ones who demonstrate "difficult" confrontational behavior.

The afternoon session featured Carefree Caregivers, by Roann Okumura and Lori Thal of the Hawai'i Island Adult Center. They emphasized

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County Corner

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the importance of self-care and management to achieve a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit. Dr. Michael Cheang of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Center on Aging, facilitated Effective Communication for Caregivers. This lively discussion acknowledged the difficulty caregivers face when asking for familial or professional assistance. It also emphasized the importance of communicating the caregiver's needs and promoting healthy caregiving through self-care. The Healing Touch session by Teresa San Miguel focused on self-care using this energy based therapy to enhance well-being and wellness. MOA Hawai'i (flower arrangement, tea ceremony, and Jorei) and several massage therapists left many caregivers rejuvenated and peaceful by day's end.

The Healthwise Handbook, sponsored by HMSA, was distributed to participants to improve home self-care and increase the ability to make better health care decisions. The conference also included a Resource Fair, featuring displays, products and

information by local agencies to help the family caregiver.

Written comments from the participants reflected the theme of the conference: "In order to be a good caregiver, you have to take care of yourself first." It echoed its conviction that caregivers should be wholly appreciated for their efforts in caring. One caregiver wrote, "I feel so affirmed to have this whole conference dedicated to me." Unquestionably, the conference's aims were achieved in encouraging the caregiver to continue caring for others and for themselves.

K A U A ' I

The Kaua'i Agency on Elderly Affairs, in partnership with HMSA, AARP and Alu Like, held their caregiver's conference on Friday, September 12, 2003, at the Aloha Beach Resort. The title of the conference, "Caring for Families, Caring for Yourself: A Caregiver's Workshop," was appropriate for the half-day event, as it gave caregivers a bit of respite and time to focus on themselves.

Participants enjoyed a breakfast buffet while listening to keynote

speaker Elinor Ginzler. Following the presentation, participants were treated to a discussion by expert panelists, including attorney J. Michael Ratcliffe, retired psychologist, Heidi Caglayan, Janet Bender Eli, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association, and Norma



Lundy, a chronic disease project manager at Wilcox Memorial Hospital. The conference concluded with a talk by Lani Nicholson, a health educator from HMSA, about their Healthwise Handbook.

Based on the comments by caregivers, the conference was worthwhile and highly valued. The Kaua'i Agency on Elderly Affairs will continue to provide caregiver support services, information and resources. For more information, call 808-241-6400.

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MAY LIFE BE LONG